

HI-FI MEETS WI-FI

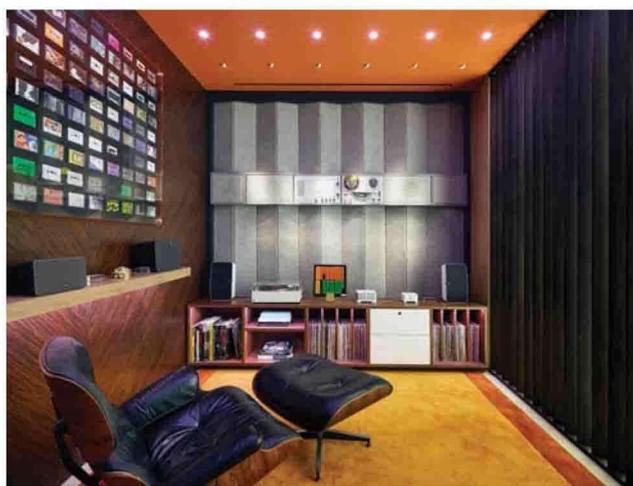
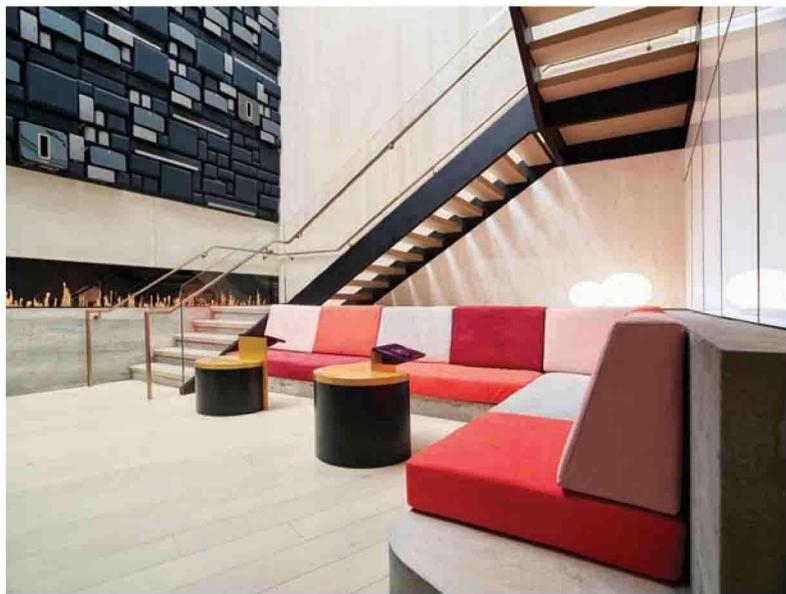
Online retailer Sonos opens its first flagship, offering the ultimate in-store music experience.

By Jennifer Acevedo, Editor-in-Chief

WHEN INNOVATIVE BRANDS PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT “retail” means today and tomorrow, there is no playbook to rely on or precedent to consult.

From the start, former online-only retailer Sonos (Santa Barbara, Calif.), known by audiophiles for its well-designed and engineered sound systems, believed the best way to experience its products was by listening to music at a friend’s house, in a real-life home environment in which they would be used.

When Sonos opened its first brick-and-mortar store on Greene Street in New York’s SoHo neighborhood this past July, those hypothetical friends’ houses were transformed into seven



BOTTOM LEFT Each of the listening rooms were custom built using four layers of acoustical Sheetrock and 2000-lb. steel framed glass doors, making them soundproof.

TOP A lounge area outside the analog room is outfitted in midcentury modern furnishings, evoking an era when vinyl was king.

10-by-12-foot individual listening rooms that resemble small houses within the 4200-square-foot store. Aiming to create an encounter that’s impossible to achieve online, each soundproof space has its own musical and aesthetic flavor to showcase Sonos’ product range.

“It’s a noisy, chaotic world, and we’re in a world of subpar listening,” explains Dmitri Siegel, vp of brand, Sonos. “To have a space that’s designed around a great listening experience, it’s really resonating with people.”

The brand also tapped local artists and musicians for contributions that would help define the spaces and express the brand: In room six, New York-based

illustrator Mark Stamaty created black-and-white, graphic novel-style illustrations for the room’s walls that add dimension and depth to the sparsely furnished area. Located at the bottom of a curved staircase, listening room seven – known as “the analog room” – is complete with a curated cassette tape collection from Sonic Youth’s Thurston Moore and a vintage turntable and reel-to-reel machine engineered by industrial designer Dieter Rams.

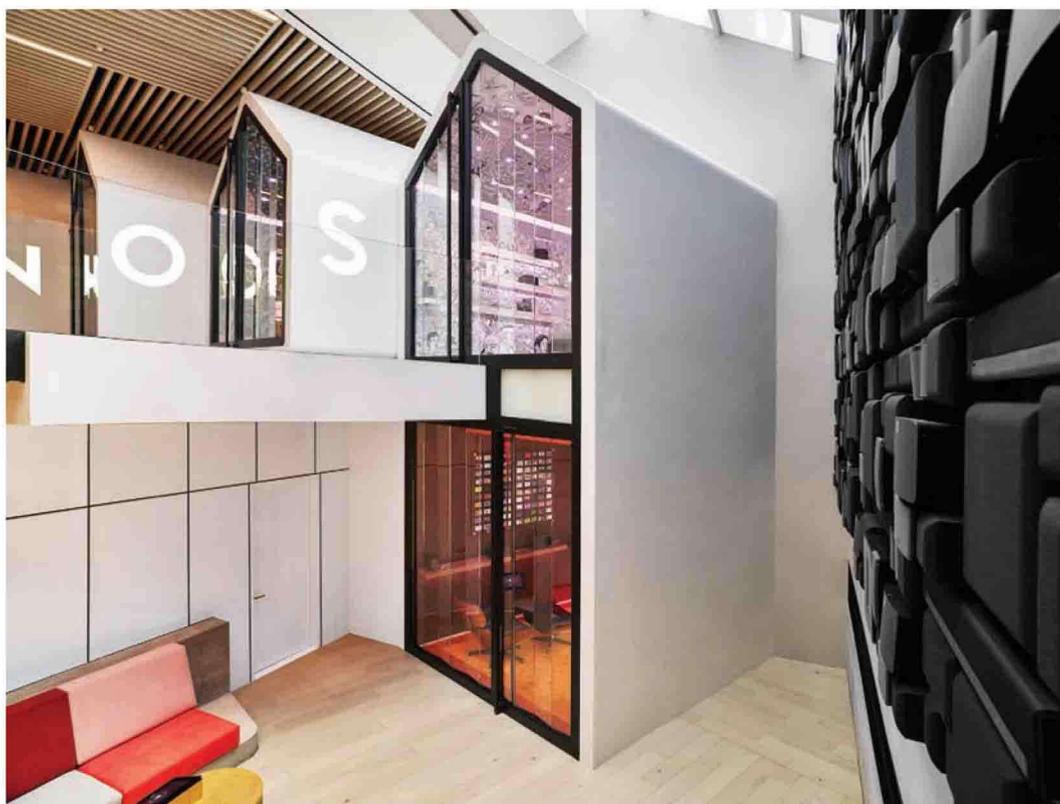
As for the main store, customers are greeted by an 8-by-10-foot illustrated map of New York’s musical history as seen by Rick Rubin, famed producer and founder



TOP A collection of vintage zines and bespoke artwork line the walls and offer visitors a nostalgic look at music history.



RIGHT A wall of speakers reinforces the prominent role sound plays in the store design, and acts as a surface to absorb sound.



PROJECT SUPPLIERS

RETAILER
Sonos,
Santa Barbara, Calif.

DESIGN
Partners & Spade,
New York

ARCHITECTURE
Rollmann Architecture
PLLC, New York

VISUAL ARTISTS
Thibaud Herem, London
Mark Chamberlain,
New York
Mark Stamaty, New York

of Def Jam records, who has reportedly been a “friend of the brand” for years. An extensive vintage zine collection (remember zines?) curated by archivist Arthur Fournier is proudly displayed among other memorabilia.

Just as no detail was overlooked in the store’s interior, the designers also focused heavily on the quality of sound in the listening rooms and open spaces. A focal wall called the “Wall of Sounds” features a collection of arranged speakers, not only meant to impress visually, but to add a sound absorbitive element to the space – where, for optimal performance, sound

experts advise keeping a 50/50 ratio of absorptive and reflective elements, like concrete floors. The store’s excellent acoustics have made it a desirable location for events managers and studio musicians alike.

“We’ve had incredible interest from the creative community to hold events [at the store], because it’s a really unique space. There’s not many places you can go, whether you’re a podcaster or a musician, where you can get a really high level of sound quality,” says Siegel. ▀